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Sheik survives a bomb

3 Kuwaitis killed; Jihad takes credit

From Inquirer Wire Services

KUWAIT — The Emir of Kuwait, Sheik Jaber Ahmed Sabah, narrowly escaped death yesterday when a remote-controlled car bomb exploded as his motorcade was passing on the waterfront.

Three people were killed, but the monarch, showered with broken glass, was not seriously hurt.

In Beirut, an anonymous telephone caller told foreign news agencies that the Islamic Jihad, or Islamic Holy War, was responsible for the attack. The caller reiterated demands for the release of 17 men who were convicted and imprisoned in Kuwait for bomb attacks on the U.S. and French Embassies and other targets in 1983.

"We once more demand the release of the detainees, otherwise all the thrones in the [Persian] Gulf will be shaken," he said.

"We hope His Royal Highness has received the message addressed to him," he said, adding: "An Islamic revolution until victory."

The Islamic Jihad, believed to be a cover name used by radical left-wing Shiite Muslims loyal to Iran, issued what it called "a final warning" on May 16, offering to trade six Western hostages in Lebanon for the bombers in Kuwait.

The hostages are: Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press; U.S. Embassy official William Buckley; the Rev. Benjamin Weir; the Rev. Lawrence Jenco, and French diplomats Marcel Fontaine and Marcel Carton.

In statements sent to Beirut newspapers, the organization had warned of "catastrophic consequences" if their demands were not met soon.

Four hours after the car-bomb explosion, the 56-year-old emir, with bruises and treated cuts visible on

tion, Arab and Islamic peoples," he said.

The emir was on his way to the al-Sief palace when the bomb was detonated by remote control, said official sources, who spoke on the condition they not be identified.

Four doctors examined the emir and said in a report distributed by the official Kuwait News Agency that he "suffered minor bruises caused by flying glass shards."

Security officials said that two royal guards and a pedestrian were killed in the blast and that 12 other people were hurt. They made no mention of arrests.

Thick black smoke engulfed the area of the explosion, and residents said they saw a large fire. Civilian traffic was detoured as security forces cordoned off the area.

Checkpoints were set up at nearby intersections and main highways.

The Kuwait parliament issued a statement denouncing yesterday's bombing as "aggression on democracy, freedom and Islamic values" and demanding action against "all quarters responsible for the incident."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak sent a message congratulating the emir on his escape from serious injury, Egypt's state-run Middle East News Agency said. Many Egyptians live in Kuwait.

The sheik became the 13th emir of this Persian Gulf country on Dec. 31, 1977. He held several cabinet positions in the 1950s and 1960s, and became the heir apparent in 1966.

Last December, four men hijacked a Kuwait Airways jetliner to Tehran, where they threatened to kill the passengers if the 17 prisoners in Kuwait were not released. Kuwait refused, and the hijackers killed two Americans before the incident ended.

Kuwaiti crown prince Sheik Saad Abdullah Sabah, who also acts as prime minister, told reporters yesterday: "We don't succumb to threats and blackmail and will act with his highness the emir to safeguard the dignity and glory of Kuwait." his face, went on radio and television and told his 1.6 million subjects that he was unharmed.

"I wish to assure you, citizens, that I am in good health," he said in a firm voice. His head was covered with the traditional scarf, but it did not have the usual black cord.

"The incidents to which we are subjected will not distract us from proceeding on with our policy of cultivating prosperity for this na-